

Rachael Lambin
was obese.
Now she's using
her experience
to help others.

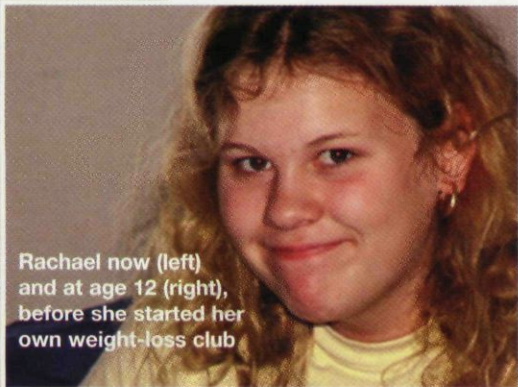
By Jennifer Magid

Giving Teens Hope

It took a shopping trip with her family to make Rachael Lambin want to change her life. Four years ago, she was 12 years old and obese. She struggled with asthma. She also had *high cholesterol* (her body had too much of a type of fat that can clog blood vessels). Rachael, from Gardnerville, Nev., was on the path to getting *type 2 diabetes* (a disease that can be caused by obesity).

Rachael had spotted a swimsuit that she wanted to wear. "At that moment, I realized that I wanted to fit in and start dressing differently. I [also] was very concerned about diseases that were caused by obesity," she says.

Rachael started exercising and eating healthier foods. As she did, she discovered that many of her health problems were directly related to her weight, including her asthma. Rachael had always thought that exercise triggered her asthma. But, she



Rachael now (left)
and at age 12 (right),
before she started her
own weight-loss club

'My goals were to start something that I hadn't seen before: a club for kids to go to and learn about health and nutrition.'

—Rachael Lambin

found, "once I lost the weight, my asthma left too."

By making small changes, such as cutting back on sugar, Rachael lost more than 70 pounds. She gained a new interest while she was at it. "I figured if I had issues, then there must have been others like me with those same issues too. I wanted to help others like me to live a healthy life," she says.

Already a member of 4-H, an organization that encourages teens to be involved in their communities, Rachael decided to create her own club. She named it HOPE (Helping Obese People through Education). "I got the idea basically from my own experiences," Rachael says. "I wanted to lose weight and just help my friends. As I started helping my friends, I saw that they were excited and they started to help others too. My goals were to start something that I hadn't seen before: a club for kids to go to and learn about health and nutrition."

Rachael started off by holding nutrition workshops in community centers and schools. Now, only a few years later, more than 2,500 young people have taken part in the HOPE program. "It's gotten bigger and better. It

[now] has people like nutritionists, personal trainers, and dietitians. It's really exciting," Rachael says. The health professionals teach teens about exercise and balanced eating. Afterward, the teens are encouraged to share what they've learned with their parents.

From her experiences with HOPE, Rachael has learned that many teens need to work on being more aware of their eating habits. "A lot of times they just don't think about it and hang with their friends and eat what [their friends] eat. I think that it's really cool to take a stand and eat healthy," she says.

Now 16 years old, Rachael continues to help others live healthy lives. She recently won an award for teen leaders. The award is given out by Do Something, a teen community service organization. Her advice for other teens who struggle with obesity is to keep trying to reach their goals.

"Don't give up. Take each day at a time. There are days that ... you'll want to eat your favorites, like at special occasions. Do it, but then picture in your mind that there is a goal, and you need to stay focused!" **CH1**



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To find out more about HOPE or Rachael Lambin's other organization, Kids Helping Kids (which supports kids with asthma), go to www.kidshelpingkids-r.us.

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